United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

Region 6
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EPA Environmental News

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The U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is seeking public comments on alternatives to control contaminated soil and groundwater at the South Cavalcade Superfund site in Houston, Texas. EPA will hold a public meeting on August 29 to provide information and answer questions about the site. The meeting will begin at 7:00 p.m. at the Ryan Civic Center, 4503 Elysian, in Houston.

The South Cavalcade site is located within the city limits of Houston, approximately one and one half miles east of the intersection of Interstate 45 and Cavalcade Street. The National Lumber and Creosoting Company operated a wood treating facility there from 1910 until 1938, when Koppers Company, Inc. acquired the property. Koppers operated wood treating and coal tar distillation operations at the site until 1961. Three trucking companies currently use the site for warehouse and terminal operations.

In 1983, the Houston Metropolitan Transit Authority investigated the site for mass transit use and found evidence of buried creosote. After additional study by the Texas Water Commission determined a potential threat to public health, the site was added to EPA's National Priorities List of Superfund sites in 1984.

Extensive studies to determine the nature and extent of contamination at the site were conducted by the Koppers Company with EPA oversight. Heavy metals and creosote-related contamination were found in soils and groundwater. The contaminants could present a health threat through direct soil contact to the skin, ingestion of soil or water, and inhalation of contaminated dust. EPA developed several alternatives to eliminate or prevent the threat of exposure to soil and groundwater contamination. All alternatives include air monitoring throughout the remedial process and long-term monitoring of soils now under reinforced concrete and buildings on the site.

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EPA recommends two approaches for dealing with soils contamination--soil washing and in situ soil flushing. Soil flushing washes contaminants from the soil without excavation. The soil would be specially treated so that the contaminants would release easily from the soil. The contaminants would then leach into the groundwater and be collected and treated. Soil washing is a mechanical separation procedure for washing contaminants from soil. Contaminated soil would be excavated, taken to a central part of the site to be washed in a large tank, then be returned to the excavated area. The contaminated wash water would be treated with the groundwater. Access problems in the southeast corner of the site preclude use of soil flushing in that area.

EPA recommends carbon adsorption and filtration to cleanse the groundwater. Water from the two upper aquifers would be pumped to and treated in an unit constructed on the central part of the site. Organic and metal contaminants would be removed as the water flowed through oil/water separation, carbon adsorption and filtration units. The treated water would be pumped back into the aquifers or discharged into the drainage ditch on the east side of the property.

One of the companies potentially responsible for the contamination at the site proposes bioremediation of the groundwater--injecting nutrients into the groundwater and letting natural soil bacteria digest the contaminants.

Copies of the site studies and other related documents will be available for review after August 22 in Houston at the City Secretary's Office, Central Library (Texas and Local History Department), Houston-Galveston Council, Department of Health Environmental Control Division and at the Ryan Civic Association "I Can" Center. The information is also available at Texas Water Commission Offices in Austin and at EPA in Dallas.

Written comments on the project should be sent to Ellen Greeney. EPA, 1445 Ross Avenue, Dallas, Texas 75202. The comment period will end September 19.

EPA will make a final decision on how to control contamination at the site after reviewing all public comments received.

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